



Specialty Independent Review Organization

Date notice sent to all parties: 6/20/2016

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

The item in dispute is the prospective medical necessity of a right L5, S1 transforaminal epidural steroid injection, radiologic exam epidurography fluoroscopy sedation.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR EACH PHYSICIAN OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHO REVIEWED THE DECISION:

The reviewer is a Medical Doctor who is board certified in Anesthesiology.

REVIEW OUTCOME:

Upon independent review, the reviewer finds that the previous adverse determination/adverse determinations should be:

- ☒ Upheld (Agree)
- ☐ Overturned (Disagree)
- ☐ Partially Overturned (Agree in part/Disagree in part)

The reviewer agrees with the previous adverse determination regarding the prospective medical necessity of a right L5, S1 transforaminal epidural steroid injection, radiologic exam epidurography fluoroscopy sedation.

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

The patient is a male who presents with low back pain which radiates to the right thigh and calf. Injury occurred due to an episode when carrying XX with a coworker. He slipped, causing him to jerk backwards. The patient has numbness and weakness in the right leg. He has had medication management, epidural steroid injection, and physical therapy for the current episode of back pain. ESIs were administered on one occasion and were minimally helpful for his right leg pain. MRI shows moderate right foraminal narrowing related to degenerative changes. Current medications include miralax, norco, tylenol with codeine.

ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION INCLUDE CLINICAL BASIS, FINDINGS, AND CONCLUSIONS USED TO SUPPORT THE DECISION:

Per guidelines, repeat injections should be based on documentation of pain relief, decreased need for medications and function response. Guidelines also

state that after the initial block or blocks are given and found to produce pain relief of at least 50-70 percent for at least 6-8 weeks, additional blocks may be supported. Claimant has right L4-L5 transforaminal epidural steroid injection, epidurogram, interpretation of epidurogram and fluoroscopic guidance XX/XX/XXXX; however, there was no objective findings such as pain relief, decreased need for medications and functional response that would warrant a need for repeat injections. Therefore, the request for the right L5, S1 transforaminal epidural steroid injection, radiologic exam epidurography fluoroscopy sedation is not medically necessary.

ODG Chapter: Low Back- Lumbar and Thoracic Epidural steroid injections, diagnostic

Recommended as indicated below. Diagnostic epidural steroid transforaminal injections are also referred to as selective nerve root blocks, and they were originally developed as a diagnostic technique to determine the level of radicular pain. In studies evaluating the predictive value of selective nerve root blocks, only 5 percent of appropriate patients did not receive relief of pain with injections. No more than 2 levels of blocks should be performed on one day. The response to the local anesthetic is considered an important finding in determining nerve root pathology. (CMS, 2004)(Benzon, 2005)

When used as a diagnostic technique a small volume of local is used (Epidural steroid injections (ESIs), therapeutic

Criteria for the use of Epidural steroid injections:

Note: The purpose of ESI is to reduce pain and inflammation, thereby facilitating progress in more active treatment programs, reduction of medication use and avoiding surgery, but this treatment alone offers no significant long-term functional benefit.

1. Radiculopathy must be documented. Objective findings on examination need to be present. Radiculopathy must be corroborated by imaging studies and/or electrodiagnostic testing.
2. Initially unresponsive to conservative treatment (exercises, physical methods, NSAIDs and muscle relaxants).
3. Injections should be performed using fluoroscopy (live x-ray) and injection of contrast for guidance.
4. Diagnostic Phase: At the time of the initial use of an ESI (formally referred to the "diagnostic phase" as initial injections indicate whether success will be obtained with this treatment intervention), a maximum of one to two injections should be performed. A repeat block is not recommended if there is inadequate response to the first block.
5. No more than two nerve root levels should be injected using transforaminal blocks.
6. No more than one interlaminar level should be injected at one session.
7. Therapeutic phase: If after the initial block/ blocks are given (see "Diagnostic Phase" above) and found to produce pain relief of at least 50-70

percent pain relief for at least 6-8 weeks, additional blocks may be supported. This is generally referred to as the “therapeutic phase”. Indications for repeat blocks include acute exacerbation of pain, or new onset of radicular symptoms. The general consensus recommendation is for no more than 4 blocks per region per year. (CMS,2004)(Boswell, 2007)

8. Repeat injections should be based on continued objective documented pain relief, decreased need for pain medications, and functional response.

9. Current research does not support a “series of three” injections in either the diagnostic or therapeutic phase. We recommend no more than 2 ESI injections.

10. It is currently not recommended to perform epidural blocks on the same day of treatment as facet blocks or stellate ganglion blocks or sympathetic blocks or trigger point injections as this may lead to improper diagnosis or unnecessary treatment.

11. Cervical and lumbar steroid injection should not be performed on the same day;

12. Additional criteria beased on evidence of risk:

a. ESIs are not recommended higher than the C6-C7 level;

b. Cervical interlaminar ESI is not recommended; &

c. Particulate steroids should not be used. (Benzon, 2015)

A DESCRIPTION AND THE SOURCE OF THE SCREENING CRITERIA OR OTHER CLINICAL BASIS USED TO MAKE THE DECISION:

- ☐ ACOEM- AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICINE UM KNOWLEDGEBASE
- ☐ AHCPR- AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH & QUALITY GUIDELINES
- ☐ DWC- DIVISION OF WORKERS COMPENSATION POLICIES OR GUIDELINES
- ☐ EUROPEAN GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN
- ☐ INTERQUAL CRITERIA
- ☒ MEDICAL JUDGEMENT, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED MEDICAL STANDARDS
- ☐ MERCY CENTER CONSENSUS CONFERENCE GUIDELINES
- ☐ MILLIMAN CARE GUIDELINES
- ☒ ODG- OFFICIAL DISABILITY GUIDELINES & TREATMENT GUIDELINES
- ☐ PRESSLEY REED, THE MEDICAL DISABILITY ADVISOR
- ☐ TEXAS GUIDELINES FOR CHIROPRACTIC QUALITY ASSURANCE & PRACTICE PARAMETERS
- ☐ TEXAS TACADA GUIDELINES
- ☐ TMF SCREENING CRITERIA MANUAL
- ☐ PEER REVIEWED NATIONALLY ACCEPTED MEDICAL LITERATURE (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)
- ☐ OTHER EVIDENCE BASED, SCIENTIFICALLY VALID, OUTCOME FOCUSED GUIDELINES (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)